

INTRODUCTION

Statutory Requirements

Government Code § 65300 requires each county to "adopt a comprehensive long-term general plan for the physical development of the county." The general plan must contain a statement of development policies, including diagrams or maps and text, setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals. The plan must include the following elements: land use, conservation, open space, circulation, housing, noise, and safety. Section 65301 (a) allows local agencies to adopt a general plan in any format "deemed appropriate or suitable...including the combining of elements;" accordingly, the Conservation and Open Space Elements have been combined in this plan. This plan also includes the Hazardous Waste Management Element required by State law.

Purpose of the Plan

The 1992 Mono County General Plan is a revision of previously adopted general plan elements; it supercedes and replaces those elements. In adopting this update of the General Plan, the Board of Supervisors repealed the following elements of the prior plan: Seismic Safety, Geothermal, Public Facilities, Recreation and Scenic Highways. The policies contained in those elements were incorporated as necessary into appropriate elements of this plan.

The purpose of the Mono County General Plan is to establish policies which will guide decisions on future growth, development, and conservation of natural resources on private lands in the unincorporated area of the county through the year 2010 in the manner required by law. An effort has been made through the public review process to make the policies in this plan consistent with the desires of county residents.

General Plan Vision

The following summarizes the vision of the Mono County General Plan:

The environmental and economic integrity of Mono County shall be maintained and enhanced through orderly growth, minimizing land use conflicts, supporting local tourist and agricultural based economies, and protecting the scenic, recreational, cultural and natural resources of the area. The small town atmosphere, rural residential character and associated quality of life will be sustained consistent with community plans. Mono County will collaborate with applicable federal, state, and local entities in pursuing this vision through citizen-based planning and efficient coordinated permit processing.

Planning Area

Mono County is located on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, south of Lake Tahoe. The county is a long, narrow strip of land – 108 miles at its greatest length and 38 miles in average width – bounded to the west by the Sierra crest and to the east by the Nevada state line. Although there are several mountain ranges in and adjacent to the county, the Sierra Nevada range dominates the landscape.

Human use and development of the area has been influenced by its isolation and the difficulty of access. Access remains limited to one main transportation route, U.S. Highway 395, which runs through the county along the foot of the Sierras for approximately 120 miles. By car, Los Angeles is 6 to 7 hours south on Hwy. 395, Reno, Nevada, is 3 hours north on Hwy. 395, and the San Francisco Bay Area is 6 to 7 hours west on various routes connecting to Hwy. 395. Two highways, S.R. 120 and U.S. 6, cross the state line into Nevada. Access both to the east and the west may be closed in winter due to snow--Hwy. 395 then becomes the only access to and through the county.

Mono County is rural and sparsely settled, with a population in 1990 of 9,956 people. Approximately one half of the county's population (4,800 people) lives in the Town of Mammoth Lakes, the only incorporated community in the county. The remainder of the population lives in a number of small communities scattered throughout the county. Approximately 94 percent of the land in the county is publicly owned; much of it is managed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power also owns large parcels of land in the southern portion of the county.

Plan Format

The general plan consists of seven elements and this Introduction:

Section I	Introduction
Section II	Land Use Element
Section III	Circulation Element
Section IV	Housing Element
Section V	Conservation/Open Space Element
Section VI	Safety Element
Section VII	Noise Element
Section VIII	Hazardous Waste Management Element

Background and environmental information for these elements, including required maps, is contained in the County's **Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)**, which is a separate document. The **MEA** fulfills General Plan Guideline requirements for information on existing conditions; it also fulfills CEQA requirements for the environmental setting section of an EIR. CEQA Guidelines (§ 15169) state that public agencies may prepare MEAs for all, or a portion of, the territory subject to their control in order to provide a comprehensive database that can be referenced in future EIRs or Negative Declarations. CEQA guidelines do not contain requirements for the format, content or procedures used in preparing MEAs; MEAs are suggested solely as an approach to identify and organize environmental and other applicable background information.

Land Use Element: The Land Use Element correlates all land use issues into a set of coherent development policies. The element describes the type and intensity of development that can occur on private lands in the unincorporated area of the County. The element also contains specific policies for the community planning areas in the County; i.e., Antelope Valley, Swauger Creek/Devil's Gate, Bridgeport Valley, Mono Basin, June Lake, Mammoth Vicinity, Upper Owens, Long Valley, Wheeler Crest, Tri-Valley, Benton Hot Springs Valley and Oasis. This element also includes the land use policies from the Airport Land Use Plans for the Bridgeport, Lee Vining, and Mammoth/June Lakes airports, as well as a summary of the land use policies from the Conway Ranch Specific Plan.

Circulation Element: Since 1980, the County has adopted the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) prepared by the Local Transportation Commission as its Circulation Element. The 1992 Update of the RTP has been expanded to address local circulation and land use issues in addition to circulation and transportation on the state and federal highways in the County. The 1992 Update of the RTP serves as the RTP and as the Circulation Elements for the County and for the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

Housing Element: The Housing Element addresses the maintenance, preservation, improvement, and development of housing in the unincorporated areas of the County. The Element includes policies to ensure that there are adequate sites and facilities available to support future housing needs and to ensure that there are a sufficient number of affordable housing units to meet the needs of the county's residents.

Conservation/Open Space Element: This element reserves open space for the preservation of natural resources, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and public health and safety, and includes policies for the managed production and conservation of the following resource areas: biological resources; water resources and water quality; agriculture, grazing, timber; mineral resources; energy resources; scenic resources; outdoor recreation; cultural resources; and public health and safety.

Safety Element: The Safety Element addresses development in areas subject to a variety of natural hazards including seismic and other geologic hazards, flooding, wildland and structural fires, and avalanche and volcano hazards.

Noise Element: The Noise Element evaluates existing and projected future noise conditions and contains policies to assure noise compatibility in future land use decisions.

Hazardous Waste Management Element: This element evaluates existing and projected future hazardous waste production in the County and contains policies for the safe transfer, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste.

Impact Analyses

Consistent with the requirements of State law, this plan requires future development projects which may have significant environmental effects to analyze potential impacts prior to project approval. The impact analysis must be carried out in accordance with appropriate county regulations.

Public Participation

The County's Regional Planning Advisory Committees (RPACs) and community planning groups reviewed drafts of the general plan; their comments were incorporated into a revised draft. The committees also reviewed proposed BLM land exchange proposals and discussed future land use needs in each community area. Further public participation in the planning process was obtained from the results of a broad survey published in a local paper. The purpose of the survey was to elicit opinions about the future of the County and planning-related issues. The responses from this survey were considered during the preparation of the General Plan.

Each of the regional and community planning groups also worked closely with the Planning Department to develop land use and circulation goals and policies for their area or to update existing goals and policies.

The Mineral Resource Technical Advisory Committee worked with the Planning Department to draft the Mineral Resource Policy section of the Conservation/Open Space Element.

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